

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-15 IO-14 ACDA-10 /093 W

-----088145 161410Z /41

R 160915Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9361

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BELFAST

UNCLAS DUBLIN 1648

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, EI

SUBJECT: IRISH SENATORIAL ELECTIONS

1. NOMINATIONS CLOSED JULY 13 FOR THE IRISH SENATORIAL ELECTION. BALLOTTING WILL TAKE PLACE ON AUBUST 16. 159 CANDIDATES HAVE FILED FOR THE 49 ELECTIVE SEATS. THE TAOISEACH (PRIME MINISTER) APPOINTS THE OTHER 11. THE WHOLE SYSTEM IS DESIGNED TO ASSURE A COMFORTABLE GOVERNMENT MAJORITY.

2. THE SENATORIAL ELECTION SYSTEM IS BEWILDERINGLY COMPLEX. THE MAJORITY OF THE SEATS (43) ARE FILLED FROM FIVE PANELS: CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL, AGRICULTURE, LABOR, INDUSTRIAL, AND COMMERCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE. IN PRACTICE, JUST ABOUT ANYONE CAN RUN ON ANY PANEL. IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO DESCRIBE THE NOMINATING PROCESS FOR THESE SEATS IN A SHORT SPACE - IT IS ALL MIXED UP WITH PARTIES, PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, ETC. THE ELECTORATE FOR THESE 43 IS COMPOSED OF MEMBERS OF THE NEW DAIL, OLD SENATORS, AND COUNTY AND (SOME) CITY COUNCILLORS. TO FURTHER COMPLICATE MATTERS THE VOTES ARE TRANSFERABLE, I.E. ONE VOTES FOR AS MANY CANDIDATES, IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE, AS ONE WISHES. IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE, THE GRADUATES OF TRINITY COLLEGE ELECT 3 AND UNCLASSIFIED

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THE GRADUATES OF THE OTHER COLLEGES ELECT AN ADDITIONAL
3. IT IS EXPECTED THAT FIANNA FAIL WILL HAVE A SIZEABLE MAJORITY IN THE NEW SENATE, THOUGH NORMALLY A FEW INDEPENDENTS ARE ELECTED.

3. THE SENATE ELECTION ALWAYS BRINGS OUT A COLORFUL LIST OF CONTENDERS. THREE DEFEATED MEMBERS OF THE

COALITION CABINET ARE RUNNING THIS TIME: JUSTIN KEATING, PATRICK COONEY AND CONOR CRUISE-O'BRIEN. ALSO THE NARROWLY DEFEATED (FOR THE DAIL) MARY ROBINSON IS RUNNING FOR RE-ELECTION. FLAMBOYANT PROF. JOHN MURPHY FROM CORK IS RUNNING; EVEN LADY GOULDING A PROMINENT HUMANITARIAN AND PHILANTHROPIST HAS THROWN IN HER HAT. HOWEVER, IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE CANDIDATES NOMINATED BY THE PARTIES WILL GET MOST OF THE SEATS, AS USUAL.

4. THE IRISH SENATE HAS NEVER RECEIVED MUCH ATTENTION. ALTHOUGH IT HAS TO PASS ON ALL LEGISLATION, AND CAN ORIGINATE BILLS, IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN SEEN AS A KIND OF PRESTIGIOUS RUBBER STAMP. THE ACTION TAKES PLACE IN THE DAIL, LOWER HOUSE, OF THE PARLIAMENT (OIREACHTAS). HOWEVER, IN THE LAST SESSION THE SENATE DID HAVE ITS MOMENTS, PARTICULARLY THE EFFORTS OF SEN. MARY ROBINSON TO GET A CONTRACEPTION BILL GOING. THE BILL FAILED, BUT THE ATTENDANT DEBATES RECEIVED WIDE PUBLICITY AND GAVE AN AIRING TO SOME RATHER FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS OF IRELAND WHICH THE MAJOR POLITICIANS WISHED TO KEEP UNDER THE RUG. THE NEW SENATE IS OF INTEREST BECAUSE APPARENTLY THE PARTIES HAVE DECIDED THAT MOST IF NOT ALL CANDIDATES FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS MUST COME FROM THE SENATE. THE WORK SCHEDULE OF THE DAIL PRACTICALLY PRECLUDES MEMBERSHIP IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, AND UP TO NOW EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MEMBERS UNCLASSIFIED

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FROM THE DAIL HAVE HAD DISMAL FORTUNES IN NATIONAL POLITICS -- MOST OF THEM LOST THEIR SEATS IN THE RECENT ELECTION. SHANNON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTIONS, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 16-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977DUBLIN01648
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770254-0121
Format: TEL
From: DUBLIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770750/aaaabrie.tel
Line Count: 97
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: df08366a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1841842
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IRISH SENATORIAL ELECTIONS
TAGS: PINT, EI
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/df08366a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009